

A TIMES INVESTIGATION

# Misconduct 341 12-1-13 didn't stop sheriff hires

Despite background checks,  
the agency took on dozens of  
problem applicants in 2010

BY ROBERT FATURECHI AND BEN POSTON

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department hired dozens of officers even though background investigators found they had committed serious misconduct on or off duty, sheriff's files show.

The department made the hires in 2010 after taking over patrols of parks and government buildings from a little-known L.A. County police force. Officers from that agency were given first shot at new jobs with the Sheriff's Department. Investigators gave them lie detector tests and delved into their employment records and personal lives.

The Times reviewed the officers' internal hiring files, which also contained recorded interviews of the applicants by sheriff's investigators.

Ultimately, about 280 county officers were given jobs, including applicants who had accidentally fired their weapons, had sex at work and solicited prostitutes, the records show.

For nearly 100 hires, investigators discovered evidence of dishonesty, such as making untrue statements or falsifying police records. At least 15 were caught cheating on the department's own polygraph exams.

Twenty-nine of those given

[See Hires, A30]

# Applicants for sheriff's jobs hired despite pasts

[Hires, from A1]

jobs had previously been fired or pressured to resign from other law enforcement agencies over concerns about misconduct or workplace performance problems. Nearly 200 had been rejected from other agencies because of past misdeeds, failed entrance exams or other issues.

Several of those with past misconduct have been accused of wrongdoing since joining the department, including one deputy who was terminated after firing his service weapon during a dispute outside a fast-food restaurant.

David McDonald was hired despite admitting to sheriff's investigators he had a relationship with a 14-year-old girl whom he kissed and groped. He was 28 at the time.

"I was in love," he said in an interview with The Times. "I wasn't being a bad guy."

McDonald had been fired from the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Department amid allegations he used excessive force on prisoners. A fellow deputy told a supervisor that he didn't want to work with McDonald because he harassed inmates.

L.A. County sheriff's officials made him a jail guard, a decision that surprised even McDonald.

"How can you put me back in the jails when I already had a problem there?" McDonald told the newspaper.

Since being hired by the L.A. County Sheriff's Department, McDonald said, he has been disciplined in connection with using physical force on an inmate.

"They want you to be more touchy-feely," he said of the discipline. "Whenever you're gonna jack up an inmate, you have to call a supervisor first."

After sheriff's officials learned The Times had ac-

Of the nearly 400 officers and supervisors from the Office of Public Safety who applied to the L.A. County Sheriff's Department in 2010, about 280 were hired.

188

Those rejected for jobs at law enforcement agencies before being hired by the Sheriff's Department.

97

Those hired who showed evidence of dishonesty.

92

Applicants hired who were disciplined previously by other police agencies for significant misconduct on duty.

29

Those who were fired or pressured to resign from a previous law enforcement job.

15

Those who were flagged by background investigators for trying to manipulate the results of a polygraph exam.

**About the numbers:** The newspaper focused its analysis on proven instances of past misconduct, incompetence or poor performance, including criminal convictions, workplace disciplinary actions and admissions of wrongdoing as adults. Reporters consulted with law enforcement experts to determine which types of police misconduct, incompetence or poor performance were significant enough to include. In the tally of applicants who showed evidence of dishonesty, reporters counted on-the-job incidents such as falsifying records. The newspaper also included instances in which sheriff's polygraph examiners determined applicants were being deceptive or were using tactics aimed at manipulating the results of the test.

cess to the records, they launched a criminal investigation to determine who had leaked them. They also said they would review whether some applicants had been improperly hired. The union representing deputies unsuccessfully tried to get a court order blocking publication of information from the files.

The records provide a rare look into hiring decisions at the nation's largest sheriff's department, an agency dogged in recent years by a string of scandals related to deputy abuse and racially biased policing.

place investigations or in cases where the applicants themselves admitted wrongdoing to sheriff's investigators.

The Times attempted to contact all of the new hires through visits to their homes, phone calls or by email. More than a third granted interviews or declined to comment. Others received inquiries but did not respond. Some could not be located. Of those who did respond, some disputed the contents in their files. Others characterized past problems as mistakes made many years ago that did not reflect how qualified they are to work in law enforcement today.

Law enforcement experts said hiring officers with problematic backgrounds undermines the department's integrity.

"Cops are held to a higher standard than the average member of society because we've got to be able to trust them," said Edward Rogner, a retired Sheriff's Department commander who was involved in the expansion but not in hiring decisions.

When told about The Times' findings, Rogner added: "I was under the impression that people with backgrounds like that were not being hired."

Sheriff Lee Baca declined to comment, but his spokesman said Baca was not aware people with such backgrounds were hired.

Before he knew of the newspaper's investigation, Baca told Times reporter that people with records of violence or dishonesty have no place in law enforcement. He said applicants who had been fired from other agencies shouldn't be given a second chance, and that he would not hire applicants with histories of illegal sexual conduct.

"Men that take women and use them as a sexual object are going to always com-

[See Hires, A31]

[Hires, from A30]  
up against my wrath," he said.

As a county police officer, Ferdinand Salgado had just gotten off work when he was arrested on suspicion of soliciting a prostitute who was actually an undercover cop at a Yum Yum Donuts parking lot in El Monte. According to authorities, he grinned at her, asked for oral sex and arranged to meet her at a motel.

He pleaded to a lesser charge of disturbing the peace. During his Sheriff's Department interview, he denied saying anything to the woman.

"I ain't buying it," an investigator told him after reviewing the police report. "You know you're not telling me the truth."

Salgado, who was hired as a jail guard and has since left the agency, wasn't the only one with a conviction on his record.

Records show almost 30 other hires had been convicted of drunk driving, battery or a variety of lower-level crimes.

About 50 disclosed to sheriff's background investigators misdeeds such as petty theft, soliciting prostitutes and violence against spouses.

One hire told investigators of having inappropriate sexual contact with two toddlers as a teenager.

In another case, Linda Bonner was given a job after revealing that she used her department-issued weapon to shoot at her husband as he ran away from her during an argument. He wasn't hit; he was lucky he was running in a zigzag pattern, she told investigators, because if not the end result "would have been a whole lot different."

### Office disbanded

About four years ago, the Los Angeles County police force called the Office of Public Safety was disbanded. Its responsibilities — patrolling county buildings, parks and hospitals — were handed over to the 18,000-person Sheriff's Department in an effort to save money.

The Sheriff's Department was not required to hire any of the former county officers, officials said.

The agency ended up hiring about 280. The majority were taken on as sworn deputies, while others were hired as custody assistants in the department's troubled jail system, security guards or for other lower-level positions.

Baca's then-second-in-command, Larry Waldie, and a small circle of aides were responsible for scrutinizing applicants.

Waldie, now retired, said he personally reviewed many of the applicants' files. He said he was unaware of any hires with histories of significant misconduct.

Presented with some of The Times' findings, Waldie said: "That information was not brought to me.... I don't recall any of these specifics, so don't ask me anymore."

Waldie then said he and his aides were under "significant pressure" from the county Board of Supervisors and other officials to hire as many county officers as possible.

"We had to have grave reasons for not hiring them," Waldie said.

A county spokesman denied Waldie's account, saying the Board of Supervisors "clearly and emphatically" told the Sheriff's Department to hire only applicants who met the agency's hiring standards.

Internal Sheriff's Department records reviewed by The Times show the union representing the former county officers was also lobbying Waldie to hire specific members, including some who had committed serious misconduct during their careers.

The department's hiring guidelines give officials wide latitude to employ people with histories of bad behavior, according to records and interviews. The specific rules are confidential to prevent applicants from tailoring their answers to meet the guidelines. A year before the county police hiring process, the Sheriff's Department's civilian monitor criticized officials for their lax hiring guidelines during a previous recruitment drive.

One taped recording of a background interview suggests the department made special accommodations for the county officers.

In the recording, a sheriff's investigator tells an applicant who was caught cheating on his polygraph exam that normally that would have meant "goodbye, you're done, there's no second chances." The investigator then told the applicant that he and other suspected cheaters might not be disqualified "as a favor because, you know, it's law enforcement." The applicant was eventually hired.

### New allegations

It is difficult to assess the performance of the new hires because law enforcement personnel records in California are not available to the public. But interviews and records reviewed by The Times show several officers hired in 2010 have faced new allegations of misconduct.

Gary Esquibel had been suspended as a county po-

lice officer for not stopping a colleague from using excessive force and failing to report the incident. Still, the Sheriff's Department hired him as a sworn deputy. He has since been accused of doing nothing as three inmates beat another inmate bloody, according to court records.

The department is investigating those allegations, which surfaced during a criminal trial of those charged in the beating. Esquibel declined to comment.

Sheriff's polygraph examiners found that county police Officer Desmond Carter was deceptive when asked about his involvement in domestic disputes. They also determined he tried to manipulate the results of his polygraph exam.

He lasted three months

as a sworn deputy. A motorist who bumped Carter's car in a McDonald's parking lot started to drive off before they were done settling the matter, according to a district attorney's memo.

Carter, who was off duty, drew his service weapon and fired several rounds at the man's car, one of which hit the wall of a nearby business.

Carter said he fired his gun after he was dragged 15 feet by the man's car, but investigators found no evidence that his clothes were damaged or that he was injured, prosecutors wrote. The district attorney did not charge him with a crime, but the Sheriff's Department fired him. Carter did not respond to inquiries from The Times left with his attorney.

Another officer, Niles Rose, was hired despite be-

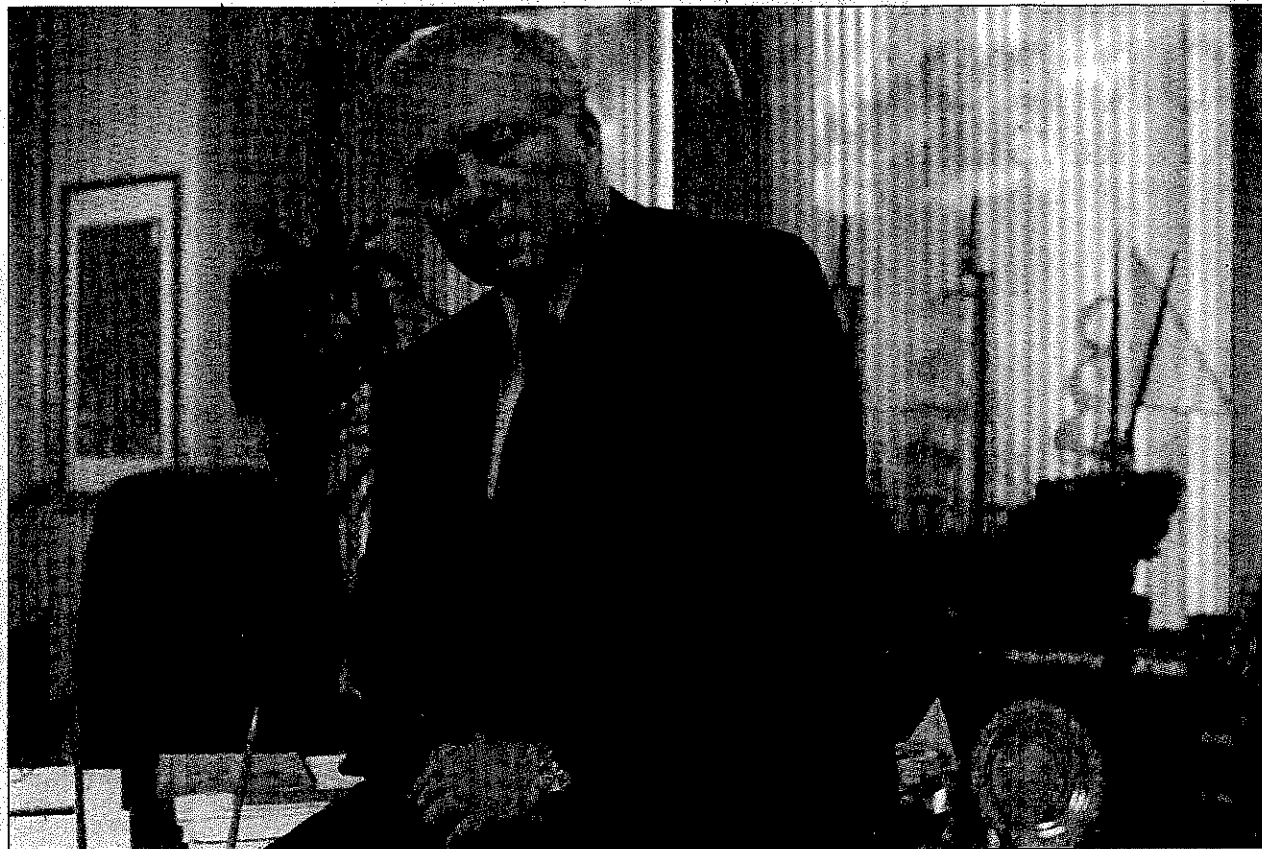
ing the subject of several unreasonable force allegations.

Rose had been investigated for misconduct 10 times at the Office of Public Safety since 2001. In three of those cases, the allegations were found by investigators to be true, according to the sheriff's background file. A former supervisor said Rose developed a reputation as being heavy-handed with suspects.

"If you want smart force used, you make sure he's in the locker room," Marc Gregory, a former county police captain, said in an interview with The Times.

After the Sheriff's Department hired Rose as a jailer, he faced new allegations of misconduct, according to interviews and a court declaration.

An inmate accused Rose



LAWRENCE K. HO Los Angeles Times

**LARRY WALDIE** was among those who scrutinized applicants from the little-known county police force.

in the declaration of hurling an inmate uniform at him, causing him to recoil and hit his head against a wall.

Rose then allegedly declared the man a "child molester" and threatened to put him in the general population, where sex offenders have been targeted by other prisoners.

Rose declined to discuss the inmate's allegation of abuse, saying it still may be under investigation. He did confirm that he had so many physical confrontations with inmates that jail managers moved him to the time card office, where he would no longer have contact with prisoners.

He called the move an overreaction.

"I'm not one to just walk around and beat on people for no reason," Rose said. "I never put my hands on someone or fought with somebody who didn't swing at me first."

Allegations of misconduct continued after Rose was reassigned to administrative work.

Sheriff's officials suspect he stole thousands of dollars in overtime funds, according to several law enforcement sources who requested anonymity because the case was ongoing.

Rose is now on leave, and a sheriff's spokesman said he's under criminal investigation.

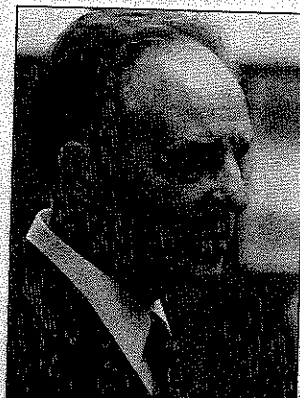
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# New sheriff watchdog role filled

WED 11-27-13 LA Times

County supervisors select Max Huntsman, a lead prosecutor in Bell corruption case, as inspector general.

By JACK LEONARD



AL SEIB Los Angeles Times

A corruption-tackling prosecutor has been selected to head a new agency that will scrutinize the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, with the power to conduct investigations inside the troubled jails and elsewhere.

After months of searching, the Board of Supervisors offered the job Tuesday to Deputy Dist. Atty. Max Huntsman, a supervisor in the district attorney's public corruption division who has been among the lead prosecutors in the trial of Bell city officials, according to county sources familiar with the decision.

Huntsman, 48, accepted the job of inspector general, and an announcement is expected Wednesday. Huntsman declined to comment.

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas confirmed the selection, saying that Huntsman had shown himself willing to take on cases despite the possibility of political blow-back.

"He has a reputation for standing up even when it's uncomfortable or unpopular," Ridley-Thomas said.

Creating the office of in-

**HUNTSMAN** has experience in corruption and police misconduct cases.

spector general was one of the key recommendations last year of a blue-ribbon commission that investigated allegations of violence inside the nation's largest jail system.

The commission, which included several former judges and a police chief, concluded that there was a pattern of excessive force by deputies in the county jails.

The panel called for an inspector general who would report to the Board of Supervisors and provide independent oversight of the Sheriff's Department, conducting its own investigations, monitoring jail conditions and reviewing the department's audits and inspections.

Currently, three civilian agencies oversee at least some aspects of the department's operations: Attorney

[See Watchdog, AA4]

## Huntsman to oversee sheriff

WED 11-27-13 LA Times

[Watchdog, from AA1]

Merrick Bobb serves as special counsel to the Board of Supervisors and issues regular reports on the department; the Office of Independent Review, headed by former federal prosecutor Michael Gennaco, monitors sheriff discipline; and the county ombudsman office handles citizen complaints.

In turning to Huntsman, a Yale Law School graduate, the board chose a veteran prosecutor who has experience in handling public corruption as well as police misconduct cases.

County sources said Huntsman's experience in reviewing force incidents for the district attorney's office was one of the factors that made him an attractive candidate to oversee the Sheriff's Department. Among Huntsman's previous assignments was a stint in the Justice System Integrity Division, where he prosecuted police officers and worked with D.A. investigators to probe officer-involved shootings and in-custody deaths.

One of his most high-profile cases in the division

ended in the failure to convict an Inglewood police officer caught on camera picking up a 16-year-old boy and slamming him onto the hood of a police cruiser. Huntsman helped try the case twice, but two juries deadlocked on assault charges against Officer Jeremy Morse. The district attorney's office decided against a third trial.

In the office's Public Integrity Division, however, Huntsman has claimed several high-profile victories. Among them were the convictions of former Los Angeles city commissioner Leland Wong, accused of accepting bribes; former Vernon Mayor Leonis Malburg, who was charged with voter fraud for living outside the city; and Patrick T. Lynch, former general manager of the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, one of six men charged in a sweeping corruption scandal.

Huntsman is currently prosecuting Bell's former assistant city manager, Angela Spaccia.

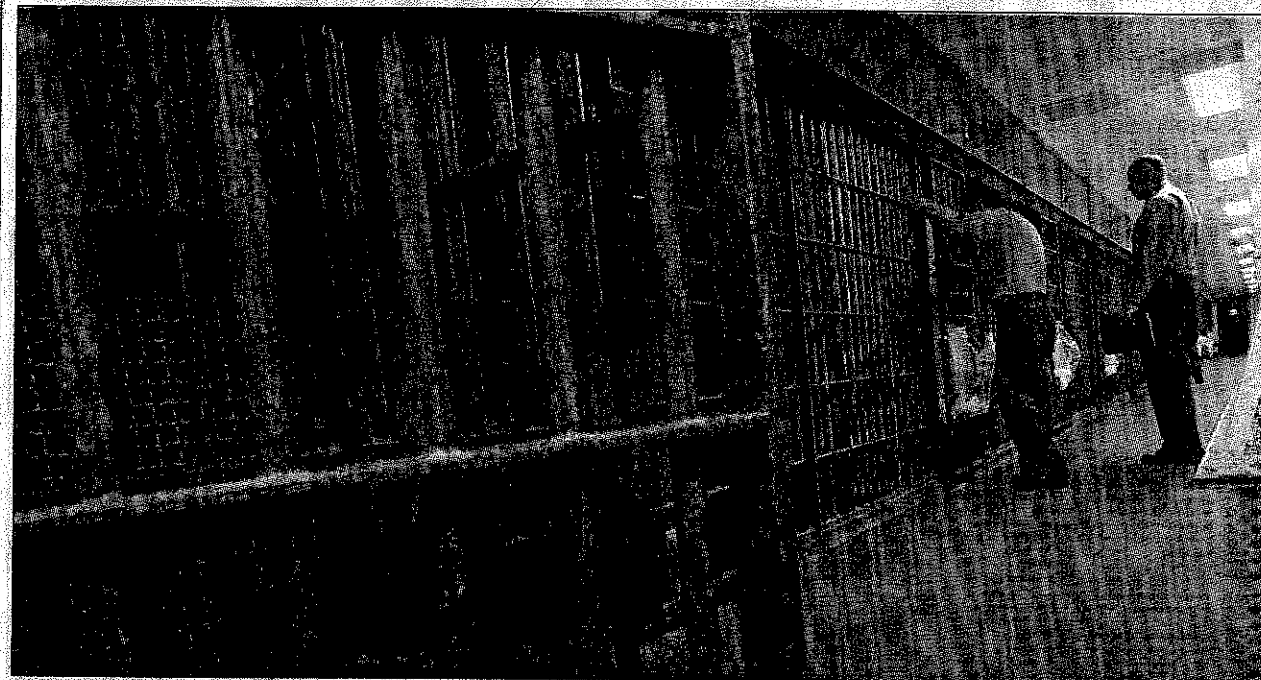
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Los Angeles Times

WED 12-4-13

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LUIS SINCO Los Angeles Times

**DEPUTIES CHECK** on inmates in the Men's Central Jail. "It's clearly inefficient, and it's arguably inhumane and unconstitutional," Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas says.

# A dungeon in L.A. County

## When will supervisors move to replace the Men's Central Jail?

STEVE LOPEZ

The visits were two weeks apart. First, I toured the Men's Central Jail in downtown Los Angeles. And then, on a family trip to San Francisco last week, I visited Alcatraz, which is now a national park.



One of the two old pens is hopelessly decrepit, with leaky pipes, bad wiring and a ridiculously outdated design.

That would be the Men's Central Jail, which dates to 1963, the year Alcatraz ceased operating as a federal lockup.

Alcatraz had its own problems as a prison, and its isolation was responsible for exorbitant operating costs. But I couldn't help but notice the more efficient layout at the former temporary home of Al Capone and Robert "Birdman" Stroud. Cells run along either side of broad walkways that allowed guards to keep an eye on hundreds of prisoners at once.

The Men's Central Jail has long rows of cells facing a wall. With this linear design, there's no way for guards to see into more than a few cells at a time. That makes it harder to prevent suicides and inmate attacks on each other or on guards. It's also hard to monitor abuse of inmates by guards, a problem to which the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department is no stranger.

"It's clearly inefficient, and it's arguably inhumane and unconstitutional," Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas told me this week.

The supervisors have perused options for demolishing and replacing the jail, perhaps with one of the modular, more circular designs that are now favored. The board is not known for its speed, but Ridley-Thomas, for one, said he wants to pick up the pace. In September, the U.S. Justice Department launched a civil rights investigation into a pattern of abuse of inmates in Los Angeles County jail facilities, and one possible outcome is for the feds to dictate remedies.

Of course, problems at the scandal-plagued Sheriff's Department go well beyond jail design. The latest example of epic, head-shaking mismanagement on Sheriff Lee Baca's watch was reported Sunday by my colleagues Robert Fatarech and Ben Poston. The department inexplicably hired dozens of officers — many of whom were assigned to jails — despite misconduct at other agencies. Among those handed guns and badges were 29 who had been fired or forced to resign elsewhere.

However that debacle plays out, the Men's Central Jail is begging for a date with a wrecking ball. A county report estimated that a jail with a more practical design would require far fewer guards, for an annual staffing savings of \$25 million. There would be an additional \$10 million savings in operating and maintenance costs. And if a smarter design leads to fewer altercations and lawsuits, there could be a savings in legal costs.

Critics of proposals to spend more than \$1 billion on a new jail say that we don't need one, even if Men's Central — home to 4,800 the

day of my visit — is demolished. They say that the money should be spent instead on education and crime prevention, and that sentences of nonviolent offenders should be reduced and drug addiction and mental illness be treated as diseases rather than punishable crimes.

I'm for all of that, but I think we will need a new jail too, especially with the added load of state inmates serving county time due to the federal crackdown on overcrowded prisons. A new jail, done right, would have a mental health evaluation and referral center to reduce that population of inmates. It would have a veteran and homeless court, and a way for inmates to occasionally make court appearances by video, rather than being in transit all day for proceedings that often last a minute or two.

It would, in short, be everything the Men's Central Jail and the other Los Angeles County facilities are not.

"This is an antiquated system," a sheriff's official said on my tour of the jail as we strolled past moldy walls and walked under a plastic tarp that was suspended from the ceiling to catch the trickle from bad plumbing.

Each day, beginning at 3 a.m., hundreds of inmates are herded out of cells and into jam-packed holding tanks, where they await transportation to courtrooms all over the county. It's a massive daily movement that is made more cumbersome and dangerous by the long corridors and poorly lit alcoves.

Electrical and plumbing repairs top \$12 million a year at the Men's Central Jail, and some replacement parts have to be custom-

made because they are no longer manufactured. Teams of inmate plumbers help with the backlog of breakdowns, but it still takes up to five days for repairs.

One inmate told me that conditions are much better in the state prisons he's been in, including San Quentin. He said his cell toilet has no running water, so he fills a plastic bag at his sink and dumps water into the commode to flush.

On one cell block, doors are solid except for two small openings. One inmate had draped a red blanket over the openings so no one could see inside. The guards said the inmate had some kind of mental issues, but he had been sent to the Men's Central Jail anyway. The vast majority of inmates with mental illness — more than 3,000 of them — are housed across the street at the Twin Towers facility, which has a modular design but problems of its own. Among other things, there's no private area for counseling and inmates often go weeks between therapy sessions.

When I suggested the guy behind the red blanket might be a suicide waiting to happen, none of the jailers could disagree. One guard said they had a suicide not all that long ago.

So when will county supervisors finally get around to a plan of action? Ridley-Thomas said he's shooting for early in the new year.

Until then, here's how one jailer summed up the Men's Central Jail at the end of my tour:

"We respectfully call it the dungeon."

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# OPI

## EDITORIALS

### More than one way on jails

Building a new women's facility isn't the only, or necessarily the best, way to reduce overcrowding.

**L**OS ANGELES COUNTY officials are scheduled to make their pitch Wednesday afternoon for \$80 million in state bond funds to construct a new women's jail. It wouldn't be just any jail, but a "reentry facility" specifically designed to prepare female offenders to return to their communities, with ample space for therapy, substance-abuse programs, mental health treatment and education. It is, in concept, the right approach for inmates who will shortly be regaining their freedom and seeking to lead responsible and productive lives.

But as is so often the case with jail planning in Los Angeles, the county has missed the bigger picture. The need for the new facility arises in part from overcrowding at other jails. County leaders argue that much of the crowding is due to their new obligation to house lower-level felons formerly imprisoned by the state, and that's true as far as it goes; but the same "realignment" law that shifted criminal justice responsibility to local authorities also encouraged the counties to divert offenders who could be handled more efficiently and successfully outside of jails.

Other counties do it properly. In Riverside, for example, more than two-thirds of convicted felons (not including violent and

tion of their time behind bars and the rest in the community, under the supervision of probation officers who monitor their participation in reentry programs. That frees up jail space and, more to the point, gears the entire system toward ensuring the inmates' successful return to freedom. That return is inevitable, but whether offenders are able to stay out of trouble once they're released is largely dependent on the county being prepared with community supervision and programming.

In Los Angeles County, by contrast, less than 6% of eligible felons have their sentences split between jail and supervision; yet to keep those offenders locked up for their full terms, the jails must instead release other felons early — with none of the community supervision that better protects the public and makes inmate reentry more successful. Now it is seeking money for new construction on the specious argument that it needs more jail beds to make reentry work. That's backward thinking and planning.

This county also needlessly jails hundreds of nonviolent but poor suspects awaiting trial while releasing more dangerous people merely because they can afford bail. Other counties have freed up jail space — obviating the need for expensive new construction — with pretrial release programs.

Before awarding jail bond funding, the state is supposed to make sure that the county has made good use of available alternatives to detention. By that standard, Los Angeles County has undermined its own case, and it will have some explaining to



## OPIN

## EDITORIALS

## The sheriff's troubling hires

How and why were dozens of officers with records of misconduct allowed to join the department?

**L**OS ANGELES COUNTY residents, taxpayers and voters have every right to expect their sheriff to hire only the best and most trustworthy deputies to carry weapons and badges, to patrol their streets and to serve in their courtrooms and jails. It's a given — or it should be — that the county would reject prospective deputies who had committed the kind of misconduct that prevented their hiring or resulted in dismissal or discipline from other law enforcement agencies.

So it was shocking to learn that the department, under Sheriff Lee Baca, knowingly hired dozens of officers with records of misconduct, including use of excessive force, misuse of weapons, solicitation of prostitutes while on duty, and dishonesty, as outlined in Sunday's story by Times staff writers Robert Faturechi and Ben Poston.

Shocking — yet in the end not completely surprising. Baca's Sheriff's Department has been marked by lax oversight, most notably over the mistreatment of jail inmates by deputies. The department also has been notorious for the disproportionate number of deputies cited for driving under the influence of alcohol.

The Times' investigation focused on 280 deputies who were hired from the county Of-

fice of Public Safety, where they had served until its dissolution in 2009. Of those, 92 had been disciplined by other police agencies for serious misconduct; 29 had been fired or pressured to resign from a law enforcement job. Especially noteworthy among those were the deputies who improperly drew or fired their county-issued weapons. Consider, for example, Linda Bonner, who shot at her husband during an argument. Or John Dall, who as a county public safety officer was reprimanded for pointing his loaded weapon at a subordinate officer. He said the action was unconscious, and that drawing his gun was a habit of his that had been remarked on.

It is indeed a remarkable habit, and not in a good way.

Any large law enforcement agency is going to have a few problem deputies, but the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department is in danger of developing a reputation as the place where law enforcement officers go when they can't make the cut — or get rejected — in other police departments. So what is to be done?

Baca faces at least two challengers to his reelection in June, and candidates are vying to succeed two termed-out members of the Board of Supervisors, which sets the sheriff's budget and authorizes hiring. This is the perfect opportunity for county government to reexamine its standards and for voters to demand that candidates lay out, in depth, what they would do to improve the county's accountability in hiring — and in all other aspects of public performance.

11-7-13 Thur

## LOS ANGELES COUNTY

# Some inmates transferred to fire camps

By Beatriz E. Valenzuela

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The first 20 prison realignment offenders participating in a unique county inmate firefighting program were transferred from Los Angeles County Jail to the Los Angeles County Fire Department Inmate Fire Suppression Camps on Wednesday.

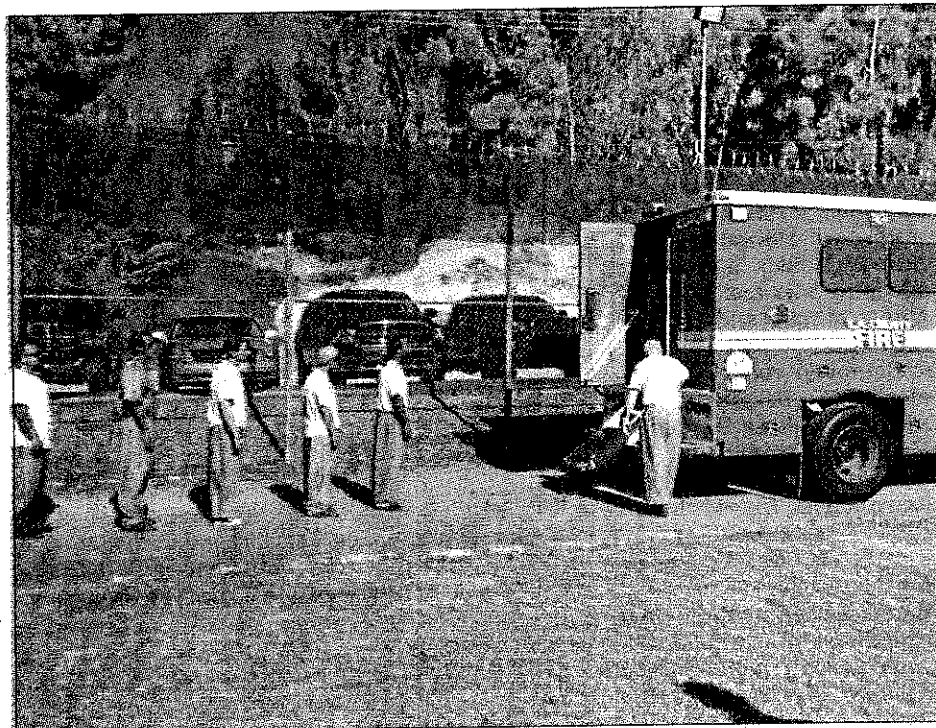
"This is a way to keep them out of county jail, offer them training and an education," said Nicole Nishida, spokeswoman for the sheriff's department.

Many state firefighting agencies, including Cal Fire, have hired felons with firefighting experience, she said.

The transfer took place at Holton Conservation Camp in Sylmar on Wednesday morning.

The program is a partnership between county fire and sheriff's departments and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and is in part a response to concerns that a prison realignment law may jeopardize the state-run conservation fire camps.

Through California's prison realignment plan, or Assembly Bill 109, the responsibility of monitoring and housing lower-level offenders was shifted from the



The first 20 of more than 500 inmates were transferred from Los Angeles County jails to the Los Angeles County Fire Department Inmate Fire Suppression Camps on Wednesday.

led to inadequate health care for inmates.

With lower-level offenders now being housed in county jails, the pool to choose from for the state conservation camp program was beginning to shrink.

"Realignment was a much-needed sentencing reform. However, with a lot fewer low-level offenders in prison, CDCR also has a smaller inmate population eligible to work in fire camps,"

CDCR is working with counties to see which are interested in sending their own inmates. Fire camps provide valuable work experience that can help offenders live a productive life when they are released."

Los Angeles County Sheriff's officials began the county inmate firefighting program about a year ago to draw from the AB 109 inmate population to help staff the county's fire camps,

security level and medical suitability.

"They have to be able to hike for three to five miles and carry heavy equipment into the field," Nishida said.

After county AB 109 offenders pass the first screening process and are accepted into the fire camp program, they must undergo several weeks of physical conditioning at the Pitchess Detention Center and Inmate Fire Training Facility in Castaic.

hour training program that teaches the inmates about fire line safety and hazards and use of hand tools, as well as standards of behavior and professionalism.

Cal Fire and the CDCR operate 42 adult and two Division of Juvenile Justice conservation camps in California that house about 4,000 state inmates, according to corrections officials.

State inmate hand crews are an integral part of fighting wildfires in California and are dispatched to fight dozens of fires every year.

The state program provides nearly 3 million firefighting hours in addition to more than 7 million community project hours annually, saving the state's taxpayers \$80 million a year, state corrections officials said.

A state inmate firefighter earns between \$1.45 and just under \$4 an hour while performing various tasks for the state.

One of the major incentives for AB 109 inmates to work on a county fire crew is earning a day off their remaining sentence for each day they work.

The Los Angeles Sheriff's Department has contracted with the CDCR to send up to 528 inmates to the fire camps, and the department hopes to train 500 to 700 county inmates annually through the program.

**LONG BEACH**

# Deukmejian among guests at courthouse dedication

*From staff reports*

**LONG BEACH »** Dignitaries including George Deukmejian came out Thursday to help dedicate the new Long Beach Courthouse, named in honor of the former governor.

A plaque was unveiled at the new courthouse, which opened to

the public Sept. 9.

"As president of the California Judges Association, I would often have the opportunity to discuss with other judges from around the state who had the greatest need for a new courthouse," said Michael Vicencia, assistant supervision judge for the Los Angeles Supe-

rior Court's South District in Long Beach. "With mold, asbestos, broken elevators and escalators and rats, I usually won that argument."

The new courthouse is a 531,000-square-foot building that boasts 31 courtrooms, updated technological features and better security. The facility handles

Long Beach cases, as well as criminal cases from the Harbor Area and matters once conducted at the closed San Pedro and Beacon Street courthouses.

The \$395 million courthouse sits on six acres of land at 275 Magnolia Ave., one block north of the old courthouse that served the public

for more than half a century, but has been in disrepair for years.

In addition to Deukmejian, Mayor Bob Foster, Assemblywoman Bonnie Lowenthal, U.S. Rep. Alan Lowenthal and Los Angeles County Supervisor Don Knabe, came to help praise those who helped build the new courthouse.

Mon 12-2-13 Daily Breeze

MONDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2013

# Many LA sheriff's hires had troubled past

**“Cops are held to a higher standard than the average member of society because we’ve got to be able to trust them.”**

— Edward Rogner, of the Office of Public Safety

cants found evidence of dishonesty for nearly 100 people who eventually became part of the department, the Los Angeles Times reported (<http://bit.ly/184vr3t>). Not all of the allegations had been proven, and not all were work related.

In all, 29 new officers either had been fired or pressured to resign from other

been under fire for alleged abuse of inmates by deputies, among other claims.

The newspaper’s report was based on internal files and follow-up interviews. The files included information from sources such as past employers and romantic partners.

Some of the hires disputed what their files said.

rent qualifications.

Sheriff Lee Baca did not comment on the specific findings; a department spokesman said Baca was unaware that new hires had troubled backgrounds.

In the past, Baca told reporters for the newspaper that there is no room in law enforcement for people with records of violence

a second chance.

The department has said it would review whether some of the hires were improper. It also launched a criminal probe to try to find who leaked the files. The union representing deputies unsuccessfully asked a court to block publication of information from the files.

In hiring officers with histories of misconduct, the department risks undermining its integrity, one former sheriff’s department commander said.

“Cops are held to a higher standard than the average

who was involved in expanding the force with new hires the Office of Public Safety, though not in individual hiring decisions.

Department guidelines give wide latitude in hiring, the paper reported. One person involved in the 2010 round of hiring — Larry Waldie, who is now retired but at the time was Baca’s second-in-command — cited “significant pressure” from the county Board of Supervisors and other officials to give the county officers new jobs.

“We had to have grave

# L.A. County settles inmate suit vs. Baca

Sat 11-30-13 LA Times

Case paved the way for the sheriff to be held personally liable for jail conditions.

By Abby Sewell

Los Angeles County supervisors have agreed to pay \$722,000 to settle a civil lawsuit filed by a former jail inmate who said Sheriff Lee Baca showed "deliberate indifference" to dangerous conditions in the county jails.

Dion Starr, 44, said he was stabbed 23 times by Latino gang members while in custody at Men's Central Jail in 2006. According to his attorney, Starr, who is black, is not affiliated with a gang. The inmate argued that Baca's failure to correct security issues in the jails made the sheriff ultimately responsible.

Baca fought to be re-

moved from the case, but the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that Starr could sue him personally — a ruling that paved the way for other cases that sought to hold Baca personally liable. The county's attorneys appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which refused to hear the case.

Last month, a federal jury held Baca personally liable for \$100,000 in a case brought by inmate Tyler Willis, who alleged he had been severely beaten by deputies while in jail. The department has said it would appeal that case, but it remained unclear whether the county ultimately would pick up the tab for Baca if the verdict were to stand.

Los Angeles County Supervisor Gloria Molina cast the lone vote against the Starr settlement. Molina said at the weekly board meeting Tuesday that she thought Baca was not doing enough to investigate allega-

[See Baca, AA4]

[Baca, from page 1]  
tions of inmate abuse and protect the county from litigation.

"I feel the board needs to stop enabling the Sheriff's Department to continue to see its excessive force claims as just another cost of doing business," she said. "The department continuously finds that every action in the department is 'within policy' when juries continued to find otherwise."

The settlement agreement does not admit culpability on the part of the department or Baca. The board voted in closed session to approve the settlement last week but details were not released until Tuesday.

Sheriff's spokesman Steve Whitmore said the department has put numerous reforms in place since 2006, when the incident occurred.

"The sheriff investigates everything thoroughly," he said. "We're investigating now more than ever before. We would respectfully disagree with [Molina's] assessment."

The two deputies who were named in the suit are still working for the department and were not found to have done anything wrong, Whitmore said.

Attorney R. Samuel Paz, who represented both Starr and Willis, said in a statement that Starr's "courage has clarified the law that high officials cannot collect their paychecks and shirk their duties to supervise. It is simply basic accountability."

Starr said in a telephone interview that he felt his case had helped bring attention to inmate abuse.

"Sheriff Lee Baca is responsible for making sure his subordinates do not engage in unspeakable acts against inmates," he said.

abby.sewell@latimes.com



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# Baca to probe officers' hiring

LA Times  
12-4-13 WED

Supervisors want to know if department eased standards for county police force.

BY SEEMA MEHTA  
AND BEN POSTON

Los Angeles County leaders demanded Tuesday that Sheriff Lee Baca investigate hiring practices in response to a Times investigation that found his department hired officers even though they had histories of misconduct.

The move, approved unanimously by the county Board of Supervisors, requests Baca to report in two weeks on "whether exceptions were made to the hiring standards despite a commitment to conduct a full background on each applicant, [and] if so, who made those decisions and how will they be held accountable," according to a motion written by Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich.

In calling for action, Antonovich cited The Times' report last weekend finding that the Sheriff's Department hired dozens of officers from a disbanded county police force known as the Office of Public Safety in 2010 even though investigators found significant misconduct in their backgrounds.

Internal sheriff's files showed that jobs were given to officers who falsified reports, accidentally fired their weapons, had sex at work, committed theft and solicited prostitutes. Twenty-nine of the roughly 280 hires had previously been fired or pressured to resign from other law enforcement agencies.

The hires were prompted by a consolidation aimed at saving money, and Antonovich said supervisors were promised at the time in public and in private that only those officers who met the Sheriff's Department's standards would be hired.

"We ought to know who made these exceptions to

[See Baca, AA4]

[Baca, from AA1]  
the rule," Antonovich said, adding that the hirings could expose taxpayers to legal liability. "We need to hold those people responsible and accountable."

Former Undersheriff Larry Waldie and a small circle of aides were responsible for reviewing the background files.

In an interview with The Times, Waldie said he personally reviewed many of the applicants' files, but he said he was not aware of any hires with histories of significant misconduct.

Waldie, who is now retired, also said he and his aides were under "significant pressure" from the Board of Supervisors and

other officials to hire as many county officers as possible.

A county spokesman denied Waldie's account, saying that the Board of Supervisors told the Sheriff's Department to hire only applicants who met the agency's hiring standards.

Baca, who is an elected official, is not subordinate to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and at times has had a testy relationship with the panel, which controls his budget. Traditionally, if the board requests his presence, Baca or a high-level official in the Sheriff's Department appears.

Sheriff's spokesman Steve Whitmore said Tues-

day that the department had completed its initial review of the hirings, but declined to release any preliminary findings.

He said sheriff's officials will present a final report to the board in two weeks, saying that Baca "understands the urgency ... and he has given the direction to his folks, 'Let's get this done.'"

"We have no problem with what they've asked for," Whitmore said. "We are well aware of the necessity to bring this to light, and that's exactly what the sheriff wants to do."

Michael Gennaco, who heads the sheriff's civilian monitoring agency, said he is conducting a separate review of the county police

hires.

He said he expects that report will be coordinated with the department's newly selected inspector general, Max Huntsman, who is expected to start his watchdog role next year.

Huntsman, a Los Angeles County deputy district attorney, said previously that he considers the 2010 hiring process an important issue and will investigate the matter if supervisors request it.

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Times staff writer Robert Faturechi contributed to this report.

# County leaders urge hiring inquiry

LA Times  
12-2-13

Two supervisors call for investigation of Sheriff's Department over officers' job histories.

BY ROBERT FATURECHI  
AND BEN POSTON

Two Los Angeles County supervisors called Monday for an independent probe of the sheriff's hiring practices in response to a Times investigation that revealed dozens of officers were hired despite histories of serious misconduct.

"I'm very, very bothered by what happened," Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky said. "Sometimes people slip through the cracks, but this seems to be a disproportionately high number who slipped through the cracks."

The Times reported over the weekend that the Sheriff's Department hired dozens of officers from a disbanded county police force known as the Office of Public Safety in 2010 even though investigators found significant misconduct in their backgrounds. Internal sheriff's files showed that jobs were given to officers who falsified reports, accidentally fired their weapons, had sex at work, committed theft and solicited prostitutes. Twenty-nine of the roughly 280 hires had previously been fired or pressured to resign from other law enforcement agencies.

"The Sheriff's Department needs to take a look at each and every one of these hires to see what remedies they have," Yaroslavsky said, "and they need to do it immediately."

He said he would meet with the Sheriff's Department's new inspector general and ask him to look into the 2010 hiring campaign and the sheriff's hiring practices in general.

"This should be one of the first things he looks at," Yaroslavsky said. "The sheriff needs to be sure this kind of situation does not reoccur."

Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich also called on the incoming inspector general to investigate the hiring of the county officers. He said in a statement that the Board of Supervisors "was assured that full background investigations would be conducted and only those qualified would be hired by

[See Sheriff, AA4]

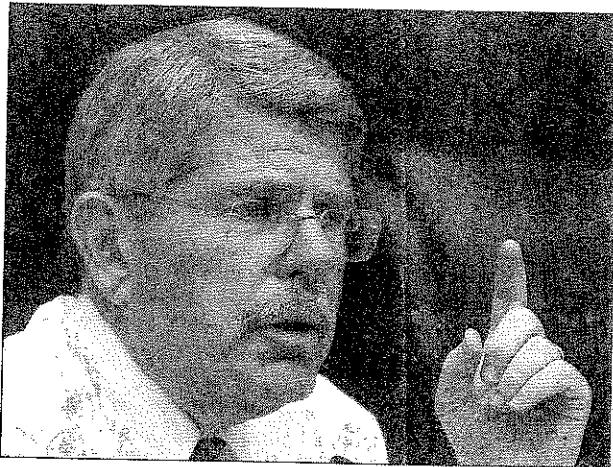
# Officials call for hiring inquiry

**[Sheriff, from AA1]**  
the Sheriff's Department...  
Those who deviated from  
the process should be ex-  
posed and held account-  
able."

Deputy Dist. Atty. Max  
Huntsman, who was re-  
cently selected as the sher-  
iff's inspector general, said  
in an interview with The  
Times that he was troubled  
by the paper's investigation,  
particularly the finding that  
dozens of officers who had  
shown evidence of dishon-  
esty were hired.

"The hiring of people who  
have not been honest is a  
dangerous thing to do," said  
Huntsman, who is expected  
to start his new role as  
atchdog next year. "A use  
of force can be placed in con-  
text.... It may or may not re-  
cur. But dishonesty, that's  
ways going to be a prob-  
lem."

Gary Wigodsky, a Los An-  
gles County deputy alter-  
nate public defender, re-  
fused. Jurors often view of-  
ficers as objective witnesses,  
he said, "but if they are not  
honest, then that changes ev-  
erything.... It really does  
threaten the integrity of the sys-



**SUPERVISOR ZEV** Yaroslavsky said he would ask  
the inspector general to look at the sheriff's hiring.

tem."

Huntsman said he has  
not yet determined the spe-  
cific areas he wants to exam-  
ine. But he said he considers  
the hiring matter an impor-  
tant one and said that if the  
supervisors want him to in-  
vestigate it, he will.

"At a minimum, we would  
ask questions, gather infor-  
mation and hopefully make  
suggestions on how to avoid  
this in the future. Even  
though I think some of those  
suggestions are pretty obvi-  
ous: Don't do this," said  
Huntsman, who currently  
prosecutes public corrup-  
tion cases.

Supervisor Mark Ridley-  
Thomas said the inspector  
general should determine on  
his own what to examine.  
But he called on the agency  
to improve its hiring stand-  
ards.

"The vast majority of the  
members of the department  
are decent," he said. "When  
you get too many that are



Photographs by LUIS SINCO Los Angeles Times

**SUPERVISOR MICHAEL** D. Antonovich said offi-  
cials were assured about background investigations.

'The Sheriff's Department needs to  
take a look at each and every one of  
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have.'

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viewed as problematic, it  
completely robs the depart-  
ment and its members of  
their credibility and their ef-  
fectiveness."

Sheriff's spokesman  
Steve Whitmore said Mon-  
day that the department  
was continuing its own re-  
view of the 2010 hirings. Sher-  
iff Lee Baca, who declined to  
be interviewed, has said  
through Whitmore that he  
was unaware officers with  
significant misconduct had  
been hired.

One law enforcement ex-  
pert said he was surprised to  
see the Sheriff's Depart-

ment made some of the hires  
highlighted in The Times' in-  
vestigation.

"I'm incredulous when I  
see these hires," said Roger  
Goldman, a law professor at  
St. Louis University who  
specializes in state licensing  
of police. "Either they were  
willfully blind or they actu-  
ally knew what was going  
on."

California is one of half a  
dozen states that doesn't  
have the authority at the  
state level to decertify an of-  
ficer for bad behavior. In  
some states, misconduct  
such as dishonesty would

prevent officers from being  
hired in the first place, Gold-  
man said. That's because  
previous law enforcement  
agencies would be obligated  
to report misconduct to the  
certifying state agency,  
which makes the ultimate  
decision to revoke officers' li-  
censes.

Merrick Bobb, who moni-  
tors the Sheriff's Depart-  
ment for the Board of Super-  
visors, said it was "deeply  
discouraging" that officers  
with past misconduct were  
allowed to join the agency.

"One thinks of a police  
department as a group of  
highly trained professionals  
with high ethical standards  
who make crucial life-and-  
death decisions. To have  
people of apparent ethical  
shortcomings ... does dam-  
age this core principal," he  
said.

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Tues 12-2-13 LA Times

# Supervisors accused of flouting law

Advocates of open meetings criticize the delay in announcing L.A. County's hiring of sheriff monitor.

BY ABBY SEWELL  
AND JACK LEONARD

The stated intent of the action was to increase government accountability.

But some open-government advocates are suggesting that the Los Angeles County supervisors ran afoul of the spirit, and perhaps the letter, of the state's open-meetings law last week when they selected a new watchdog to monitor the Sheriff's Department.

The board met behind closed doors Nov. 26 and tentatively chose prosecutor Max Huntsman to fill the newly created position of Sheriff's Department inspector general. County officials did not publicly report the decision, but The Times disclosed it that evening, citing unnamed sources.

Kelly Aviles, vice president for governmental compliance for the open-government group Californians Aware, said county officials should have immediately reported their decision to offer the job to Huntsman under the state's Ralph M. Brown Act, which governs the actions of elected officials outside the public eye.

"It sounds pretty much like the board voted to hire him, but they just hadn't formalized the arrangement ... and once you take an action, you're supposed to announce the votes yea or nay," she said.

County Counsel John Krattli said supervisors had directed Chief Executive William T. Fujioka to negotiate a salary with Huntsman, but they were not required to report the action because the selection had not been finalized.

"Until Bill was able to actually go out and negotiate, it was not a done deal," he said.

Huntsman said he had made it clear early on that he would accept the job, whatever the terms. He said he met with county supervisors during last week's closed session and afterward Fujioka called, offered the job and explained the terms.

"I said, 'Yes, sir,'" Huntsman said.

He added he doesn't know what occurred in the closed session after he left or whether any action should have been reported in public.

The board has drawn criticism before for conducting public business behind closed doors. The district attorney's public integrity division — where Huntsman is now a top prosecutor — concluded the board violated the law in 2011 when members met privately with Gov. Jerry Brown to discuss a plan to shift state prison inmates to local jails and probation programs.

As for the inspector general, the board created the position at the recommendation of a blue ribbon panel that investigated allegations of violence in the jails. The board had been interviewing and reviewing candidates in closed session for months.

Michael Jenkins, a municipal attorney and chairman of the Brown Act Committee for the League of California Cities, said he did not think the board was required to report the action before Fujioka informed Huntsman of the offer's terms.

"You don't want to make an announcement at the end of the closed session if the deal isn't fully cooked," he said.

The county sent out a press release announcing the selection of Huntsman the day after the closed session, an action Jenkins said wasn't legally necessary. "I think they were pretty transparent," he said.

The board formally approved Huntsman's appointment with an annual salary of \$204,432 at a public meeting Tuesday.

Board members have been stung by immediately announcing a top management selection in the past. In 2007, they came out of a closed session and announced that they had chosen Orange County's chief administrator, Thomas G. Mauk, as their new top executive. Within an hour, they released a statement noting Mauk had accepted the job.

But a day later, Mauk changed his mind after Orange County supervisors hastily convened to sweeten his contract and persuaded him to stay. Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky called it "an embarrassment for everyone involved."

Still, Peter Scheer, executive director of the First Amendment Coalition, said the better course would have been to report Huntsman's selection immediately after last week's meeting.

"Yes, there is a risk that the individual could turn down the offer, causing embarrassment both to the agency and to the second-choice applicant hired in her place," he said. "But the public's need for transparency in the hiring process — particularly for high-level positions — outweighs the risk of some embarrassment."

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